# **KYVL Collections Work Group**

# **Database Assessment**

**REPORT** 

2002/2003

Submitted to VLAC

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# **KYVL Collections Work Group Membership**

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# **KYVL Collections Work Group Assessment Committee Members**

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Melissa Lanning, University of Louisville, Resource Person Gay Perkins, Western Kentucky University, Resource Person

#### **BACKGROUND**

Discussions of an assessment of the KYVL Databases has been a recurring topic in the Collections Work Group. At the May 1, 2002 meeting, it was determined that a formal assessment of the current family of databases should take place prior to the next renewal period for 2003/2004. This group of databases would have been available for a sufficient period of time for an accurate assessment to take place. The general charge of the Assessment Committee was to complete the evaluation of the current databases and present its findings to the Collections Work Group as a whole. To that end, an Assessment Committee of the KYVL Collections Work Group was formed at that meeting. During that discussion and subsequent ones, it was determined that we should approach known experts in the field of Assessment in Kentucky to work with us on this task. Gay Perkins from Western Kentucky University and Melissa Lanning from the University of Louisville graciously agreed to assist the Assessment Committee with their work.

The deadline for completion of this work was driven by the renewal timeframe within the Commonwealth's Purchases process. The current database contracts are renewable on an annual basis. In order for the Collections Work Group to make recommendations to VLAC and for KYVL to take appropriate action, it was determined that the Assessment Committee's work should be completed by March 2003.

In previous assessments, both quantitative and qualitative data were utilized in making recommendations. It was determined that this same pattern would be improved upon and deployed. Subsequently, information which would be utilized in this assessment would include database use statistics, a customer satisfaction survey, and focus groups. Although usability is extremely important and was a topic of discussion, the various interfaces to the databases continue to make this type of assessment difficult to accomplish.

The customer satisfaction survey was the first task because we knew based on previous surveys that it would take considerable time and effort to accomplish. We also determined that we would ask for volunteers to participate in the focus groups through this assessment instrument. CPE/KYVU migrated to new software platforms in July and ultimately it was determined that we could utilize a satisfaction survey option that was available as part of this package. Although it was not extremely sophisticated, it was readily available and ultimately usable. Database use statistics were brought into the mix to meet our quantitative assessment need. It should be noted that the compilation of these statistics is extremely difficult to manipulate although the contracts require that these statistics be provided to KYVL in a prescribed manner. The focus group assessment option was revisited because of the timeframe and a different approach was taken in an attempt to gain similar information from our customers. Summaries of all of these activities follow.

## **KYVL Database User Survey Results**

The KYVL Database User Survey (Attachment A) was deployed in November 2002 via the KYVL website and by conventional paper letter and survey. Responses were accepted through both of these means. The Survey was to have originally concluded on December 31, 2002. However, the response rate was lower than anticipated. Subsequently, the survey deadline was extended through January 31, 2003. By that time, there were 649 respondents to the survey.

#### Respondents identified themselves

•	Librarian	424	66%
•	Teacher	74	11%
•	Student	64	10%
•	Other	84	13%
	TOTAL	646	100%

#### Type of library used most

•	Public University or College	137	21%
•	Private University or College	57	9%
•	K – 12 School Library	261	40%
•	Public Library	164	25%
•	Business, hospital or state agency library	29	5%
	TOTAL	648	100%

#### From where databases are most often accessed

•	Library	454	70%
•	Office	76	12%
•	Home	119	18%
	TOTAL	649	100%

The respondents were asked to rate each individual database based on quality.

The **Never Used** category was selected most frequently for 39 of the 45 databases.

The *Excellent* category was the majority vote getter for 4 of the 45 databases.

- Academic Search Premier
- ERIC
- Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia
- Novelist

The *Good* category was the majority vote getter for 1 of the 45 databases

Newspaper Source

Eliminating the **Never Used** category from the mix, **Good** or **Excellent** categories were selected most often for every database. This was borne out by the overall and overwhelming quality rating of **Excellent**.

When asked which of the following subject areas would you like to see better covered the results were very clearly delineated:

•	Literature	218
•	Current Events	195
•	History	166
•	Library Science	164
•	Education	143

Without the parameters of a prescribed list of topics, respondents were asked to **list other subject areas that they felt needed coverage in the KYVL** family. 168 participants (26%) responded. While many received only one or two votes there were some that were clearly of interest to a number of people. These are listed in descending order with the top vote getter being listed first. All of the following received from 20 votes down to 6.

- Arts including music, art, poetry, theatre, film, and dance
- Careers
- Courier Journal and Kentucky Newspapers
- Genealogy
- Humanities
- Nursing
- Philosophy
- Religion/theology

The participants were asked to name specific databases that they would like to have added to the family. Again, of the 157 respondents (24%), most databases received one or two votes. There was again a clear cut off point. The top vote getters are listed in descending order.

- MLA
- SIRS
- Electric Library
- Books in Print
- World Book

It may also be of interest to note that several individual products of Gale and Grolier were mentioned. 6 of the Gale products received one vote each.

However, the following Gale products received multiple votes:

GaleNetGale's Literary CriticismGale's Health Reference Center

Several of the Grolier products received multiple votes:

Grolier Lands and People 3
Grolier America the Beautiful 2
Grolier New Book of Knowledge 2
Grolier Book of Popular Science 1

#### **FOCUS GROUP**

As a part of the Database Survey, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group. 71 of the respondents (11%) indicated that they would be willing to participate and provided contact information. With the deadline for the Survey itself being extended and the subsequent shortened timeframe for the assessment project, the original idea of focus groups became unworkable. Ideas about how to collect qualitative data through other methods were discussed by the Assessment Committee members. It was determined that standardized questions could be asked of each individual which would subsequently collect the appropriate data. The collection preference was through a face to face session. If that proved to be impossible the next preferred collection method would be a telephone conversation. E-mail could be utilized but would be the last collection preference since the interviewer would miss both the visual and auditory clues during the conversation.

Because the collection method had changed significantly from a focus group to an individual contact, each of those who had indicated that they would be willing to participate in a focus group was contacted via e-mail. They were told of the change in strategy and were asked if they were willing to continue to participate. If they were willing to continue in the process, they were asked their contact preference. 30 responded that they were willing to continue and they indicated that e-mail was their contact preference. Subsequently, the Follow-up Survey questions listed below were sent. 25 individuals responded and the results follow.

### **KYVL Database Survey Follow Up**

The KYVL Database Survey Follow Up Questions (Attachment B) were distributed to the participants who had indicated that they were willing continue. We received email responses from 25 individuals representing patrons, students and librarians from public libraries, private academic libraries, public academic libraries and K12 libraries.

In summary, the responses were overwhelmingly positive in terms of the database usefulness and value. For example, "I just want to say that for me, KYVL is a tremendous resource and helps me be so much more productive in my work, because I can access all this information from my home office. The range of information available is incredible, and I think Kentuckians are so fortunate in having this available to them." None recommended major changes or cited impossible problems with the databases.

However, several points were made by multiple respondents which should be highlighted:

- Promotion of databases. Respondents typically said "KVL is way too buried." Both the
  KVL and library staff must share responsibility for promotion. Several respondents felt
  the bulk of that responsibility was theirs. KVL could do better publicity. "There are a lot
  of people who could benefit from KVL (like businesses, teachers, etc) if they only knew
  about it."
- Information Literacy. Work needs to be done to train patrons to understand what is in the
  databases and how they may relate to their specific information needs. For example, one
  individual wrote, "The division of databases means that you [need] a lot of prior
  knowledge of where the answer will be...[patrons] need to be convinced that KVL is
  superior to just learning to surf."

Much seems to hinge on the librarian/teachers ability and time to do adequate training. One librarian, dealing with grades 7-12 said: "I absolutely love the KYVL and use it every day. It's very easy to use--even my 7th graders can use it with no trouble. This resource has enabled a small school like mine to have high quality resources that I would not be able to afford otherwise. Any shortcomings I have listed may be the result of my lack of knowledge about everything available on the KYVL. This resource is absolutely a life-saver on most days. Thank you so much for making it available to us."

The confusion about KVL content is typified in this student's remark, referring to the KVL as a "web site": "I would most likely use the site to research the things I need to know for school term papers but probably not for anything else because I use the local library website for everyday research."

- Quite a few comments seem to affirm the "user-friendly" nature and ease-of-use of the databases for patrons and students.
- Passwords. When encountered unexpectedly, they are an obstacle. This seems to depend on the success of libraries to communicate to their users.

#### Other observations:

- Lack of newspaper content was lamented
- Difficulty of finding "statistical information"
- "How to" tutorials praised
- Suggest default set to Full Text to avoid frustration when students don't find something
  "right away." Similarly, one respondent said "I think the EBSCO service is set up for
  university research and they [KVL] have given it to high schools.
- Trying to search by title of publication is awkward (finding which database may have it)
- Lack of historical biographies cited as a weakness (Wilson is more modern)
- Most of the respondents were librarians who have more experience and skill. For example "Yes, I usually do find what I am looking for but, then again, I am a librarian."

# **KYVL Database Usage Statistics**

Upon examination of the gross database search data on a monthly basis from October 2001 through December 2002, there are clear tiers of use. The obvious top tier includes the following databases:

#### **TOP TEN**

1. Academic Search Premier EBSCO

Ranked Number 1 in use 14 of the 15 months

2. Career and Technical Education ProQuest

Ranked Number 2 or 3 most months

These last 8 were in the top ten ranking during this timeframe but moved too much from month to month to allow for any specific detail.

•	Computing	ProQuest
•	WorldCat	OCLC
•	MasterFILE Premier	EBSCO
•	Newspaper Source	EBSCO
•	MAS Ultra-School Edition	EBSCO
•	Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection	EBSCO
•	Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia	Grolier
•	PsycINFO	EBSCO

#### **BOTTOM TEN**

It was difficult to rank these. However, they consistently made their appearance at the bottom of the list.

<ul> <li>Stedman's Medical Dictionary</li> </ul>	EBSCO
EBSCO Online Citations	EBSCO
<ul> <li>Nueva encyclopedia Cumbre en linea</li> </ul>	Grolier
<ul> <li>MEDLINE</li> </ul>	OCLC
<ul> <li>Image Collections</li> </ul>	EBSCO
<ul> <li>American Heritage Children's Dictionary</li> </ul>	EBSCO
<ul> <li>Union List of Periodicals</li> </ul>	OCLC
<ul> <li>EBSCO Online Citations</li> </ul>	EBSCO
• ERIC	OCLC
<ul> <li>Military Library FullTEXT</li> </ul>	EBSCO

It may of interest to note that Grolier's Encyclopedia Americana average ranked at number 15 if you took out the summer months were it hit an obviously lower rank due to K-12 being closed.

It should be noted that this Work Group has continuously found the statistics reported by Wilson for the Wilson Biography Reference Bank to be questionable. This is particularly obvious when examining the statistics reported by User Community. Individual libraries have mentioned that they have had IP address recognition problems surrounding the KYVL contracted databases and those to which they subscribe.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The KYVL Collections Work Group met as a whole on March 31, 2003 to discuss the work of the Assessment Committee and to formulate recommendations in conjunction with the current family of databases to be made to VLAC at their April 14, 2003 meeting.

It was concluded that based on the information at hand that the current family of databases appears to be meeting the needs and expectations of the majority of our users. At first glance, there appears to be a "disconnect" between the overwhelming overall rating of Excellent expressed by the participants in the KYVL Database Users Survey and fact that the Never Used category was selected most frequently for 39 of the 45 databases. This is most likely a result of the fact that because of how databases are accessed our users frequently have no idea of the actual name of the database that they are searching.

In attempting to determine if there was a need for any changes in the current database family, we were confronted with the product package issue. Although it might seem obvious that some databases could be dropped particularly as is evidenced by minimal usage, they are mostly a part of a set package from a vendor. As such it is unlikely that dropping a specific database that has been offered and priced as part of the package would result in any savings.

### **LOW USAGE**

A major disappointment for those of us who had worked on the selection of the Grolier Encyclopedias was the continued low usage of <u>Nueva encyclopedia Cumbre en linea</u>. We had all been very excited by the possibility of offering a Spanish language encyclopedia and subsequently distressed by the low usage. However, those on the Work Group who have been working directly with this population indicated that what they were seeing was that the children of these families were learning English and didn't need or want to use a Spanish language encyclopedia. They were in turn then translating for the older generations in their families who were not English speakers.

The other Grolier encyclopedias are heavily used with the <u>Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia</u> consistently appearing in the top ten list every month. However, when asked for recommendations for specific databases to be added to the family, <u>World Book</u> came in fifth. <u>Grolier's New Book of Knowledge</u> was specifically requested by two of the respondents. During the last RFP process, access to <u>World Book</u> was not continued because of the extremely high cost and technical problems which they seemed unable to resolve.

#### RECOMMENDATION

• We would like KYVL to ask Grolier about the possibility of substituting their New Book of Knowledge for their Nueva encyclopedia Cumbre en linea.

#### SPECIFIC DATABASE REQUEST

When asked in about specific delineated subject areas that they would like to see better covered, literature was the top selection. When asked to list subject areas that needed more coverage, arts and humanities were top vote getters. It therefore came as no surprise that MLA was brought forth as the most frequently listed specifically desired database. This database has continued to appear high on wish lists for years for inclusion in this family of databases. Cost has been the prohibiting factor to acquisition. Regardless of that fact, the Work Group feel compelled to address this issue. Although there may be no possibility of purchasing it, we feel that we should obtain a current price.

#### RECOMMENDATION

We would like to ask KYVL to request a quote from EBSCO for MLA.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

Newspaper Source is consistently in the top ten used databases. It is obvious that this is an area of considerable interest. It has continually risen to near the top of the lists of requested topic areas for selection and purchase. In this assessment process, the second most selected area of major interest listed in the delineated subject areas as Current Events. In listing other subject areas which they felt needed additional coverage, the Courier Journal and Kentucky newspapers was the third most popular area mentioned. In the KYVL Database Survey Follow Up, one of the participants lamented the lack of newspaper content. The Work Group decided to not recommend pursuing the Courier Journal and other Kentucky newspapers at this point in time. This is not a dead issue. There is simply no good option or coverage currently available that they could recommend. This issue will be revisited for the next renewal cycle.

# **SOCIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS**

We have been informed by EBSCO that they will no longer be able to provide us with SocAbs after the end of this contract year; e.g.. September 30, 2003. Although they are the process of creating a competitive database under their own flagship, this will not be available by the end of September. Subsequently, they have informed KYVL that they will reduce their fiscal obligation as a result of their pulling access to this database. In examining the usage statistics only, EBSCO's Sociological Collection and Sociological Abstracts are consistently in the top half with Sociological Collection consistently ranking higher than SocAbs. However, this may be a result of SocAbs linking back to Sociological Collections for full text. This issue needs to be pursued in several ways. A detailed examination of the content in Sociological Collection needs to be pursued. A comparison of OCLC FirstSearch's SocAbs and Cambridge Scientific Abstracts should be undertaken, also. Because this work needs to be done, it is much too soon for the Work Group to have an appropriate response to this issue.

# **ATTACHMENT A**

# **KYVL Database User Survey 2002**

To help us provide you with better service, please answer as many of the following questions as possible.

	I am a: ☐ Librarian ☐ Teacher ☐ Student ☐ Other
2.	What type of library do you use the most?  Public University or College Library  Private University or College Library  K-12 School Library  Public Library  Business, hospital, or state agency library
3.	From where do you most often access databases?  ☐ Library ☐ Office ☐ Home

Please rate the following databases based on the quality of the information contained in each:

	Database	Poor	Fair	Neutral	Good	Excellen	Never used
						t	
4.	Academic Search Premier						
<b>5</b> .	AGRICOLA						
6.	ArticleFirst						
7.	Biography Reference Bank						
8.	Business Source Premier						
9.	Career and Technical Education						
10.	CINAHL						
11.	Computing						
12.	ContentsFirst						
13.	EBSCO Animals						
14.	Electronic Collections Online						
15.	Electronic Theses and Dissertations						
16.	Encyclopedia Americana						
17.	ERIC						
18.	Funk and Wagnall's New World Encyclopedia						
19.	GPO Monthly Catalog						
20.	Grolier Multimedia Excyclopedia						
21.	Health Source: Consumer Edition						
22.	Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition						
23.	Kentuckiana Digital Library						
24.	Kentucky Adult Education Resources						
25.	LINCS						
26.	MAS Ultra: School Edition						
27.	MasterFILE Premier						
28.	MEDLINE						
29.	Middle Search Plus						
30.	Newspaper Source						
31.	NoveList						
32.	Nueva Enciclopedia Cumbre en						

	PapersFirst							
34.	Primary Search							
35.	ProceedingsFirst							
36.	Professional Development Collection							
37.	Psychology and Behavioral Sciences							
	Collection							
38.	PsycINFO							
39.	Regional Business News							
40.	Religion and Philosophy Collection							
41.	Sociological Abstracts							
42.	Sociological Collection							
43.	TOPICSearch							
44.	Union List of Periodicals							
45.	USP Pharmacopoeia DI: Advice for							
	the Lay Patient							
46.	World Almanac							
47.	WorldCat							
□ Poor       □ Fair       □ Neutral       □ Good       □ Excellent       □ Never Used         49. Which of the following subject areas would you like to see better covered by the KYVL databases?         □ Biology       □ Business       □ Chemistry       □ Computer Science         □ Current Events       □ Education       □ Engineering       □ History         □ Library Science       □ Literature       □ Mathematics       □ Medicine         □ Physical Science       □ Psychology       □ Sociology       □ Technology         50. What other subject areas, beside those listed above, would you like to see covered by the KYVL databases?								
<b>50</b> .W	/hat other subject areas, beside those lis	ted abo	ve, woul	d you like	to see co		-	ases?
<b>50</b> .W	/hat other subject areas, beside those lis	sted abo	ve, woul	d you like	to see co		-	ases?
	Please recommend any specific database					overed by th	-	ases?
	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,					overed by th	-	ases?
<b>51</b> . F	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	e that yo	u would	like to see	e added t	overed by th	e KYVL databa	

Linea

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Please submit this form to the service desk at this library or mail to:

Myra Morton

Ky. Dept. for Libraries and Archives
P.O. Box 537

Frankfort, KY 40602

Fax: 502-564-5773

## **ATTACHMENT B**

## **KYVL Database Survey Follow Up**

#### **Questions**

- 1. Are you responding as a librarian, an educator, a library patron? Other?
- 2. How frequently do you use, or do you assist someone in using, the KYVL databases? If you don't use the KYVL databases very often, why not?
- 3. What types of information are you most likely to search the databases for? The least likely? Why?
- 4. Do you usually find the information you are looking for? If not, why not? Please be specific regarding aids and/or barriers to your success.